CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

intercepting a request from a user for a web page, the user connected to a port of a packet forwarding device that prevents the user from accessing a network coupled to the forwarding device;

directing the user to a network login page;

authenticating the user; and

allowing the user to access the network when the user is authenticated.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein intercepting a request from a user comprises intercepting a HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) request from the user.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising receiving a Domain Name Service (DNS) request to translate a domain name specified in the HTTP request into an Internet Protocol (IP) address.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising proxying the DNS request to a DNS server.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising receiving a response from the DNS server with a DNS-resolved IP address.

6. The method of claim 5, further comprising sending the DNS-resolved IP address to the user.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising intercepting a request from the user directed to the DNS-resolved IP address.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein directing the user to a network login page comprises responding to the user with a redirect to a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) address for the network login page.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising receiving a DNS request from the user to translate a domain name for the network login page into an IP address.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising responding to the user with the IP address of the packet forwarding device.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising receiving from the user a request to the IP address of the packet forwarding device.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising responding to the user with the network login page.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising receiving an authentication request from the user with user identification data.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein authenticating the user comprises parsing the authentication request and forwarding the authentication request to an authentication server.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein parsing the authentication request and forwarding the authentication request to an authentication server comprises creating a packet with the user

identification data in accordance with the RADIUS communications protocol and forwarding the RADIUS packet to a RADIUS server.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising receiving a response from the RADIUS server to indicate whether the user identification data is authentic.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein allowing the user to access the network when the user is authenticated comprises unblocking the port of the packet forwarding device to allow the user to access the network when the user is authenticated.

18. An apparatus comprising:

a packet forwarding device coupled to a network, the packet forwarding device having a port that prevents a user connected to the port from accessing the network until the user is authenticated; and

an authenticator discovery controller coupled to the packet forwarding device to intercept a request from the user for a web page and direct the user to a network login page for authentication.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising a network login controller coupled to the packet forwarding device to authenticate the user and allow the user to access the network when the user is authenticated.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the packet forwarding device having a port that prevents a user connected to the port from accessing the network comprises the packet forwarding device having a blocked port that prevents a user connected to the port from accessing the network.

21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the network login controller to unblock the port of the packet forwarding device when the user is authenticated.

22. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the authenticator discovery controller to further receive a Domain Name Service (DNS) request from the user and to proxy the DNS request to a DNS server to translate a domain name into an Internet Protocol (IP) address.

23. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the packet forwarding device is a switch.